

THE ROMANCE OF A TIBETAN QUEEN.

BY THE EDITOR.

TIBET is still a country of mystery to western people, but we are more and more gaining an insight into the character of the Tibetan nationality. One of the main and salient features of the life of the Tibetans is their intense religious sentiment which expresses itself in their political institutions and above all in their literature. Dr. Berthold Laufer of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, has recently translated a novel relating an episode in the life of a Tibetan queen which was written at an early date, perhaps before the year 1000 of the Christian era.¹ The earliest mention of this story dates back to 1231 A. D., in which year a copy of the book was discovered in a grotto in the shape of a single long roll of yellow paper, and it was reprinted at that period. Another reprint made in the 14th century under the government of Pag-Mo-Gru as a revised edition, and forming the basis of other manuscripts different from the first one found in the grotto, was published in 1652 at the request of the regent Sans-Rgyas Rgya-Mts'o, who had the printing blocks carved and the story printed in a Tibetan monastery in the year 1674. A third print was made almost simultaneously in another monastery, and a fourth one under the patronage of the fifth Dalai Lama, who, though the book belonged to the literati of the Red School, sanctioned it for use in the monastery of the orthodox Yellow Church. Among the recent republications of this Tibetan novel, one has appeared in Peking (1839) under the auspices of the head tribunal of the Yellow sect in Peking.

The text of our book is in prose, and any one who wants to acquaint himself with Tibetan sentiments would do well to familiarize himself with the style of the stories which the Tibetan public enjoy.

The Tibetan mind is at once passionate and religious. The story begins with the building of a temple and its inauguration.

¹ Berthold Laufer, *Der Roman einer tibetischen Königin*, Leipsic, Harrassowitz, 1911.

The symbolism representing the three aspects of Buddhahood as the three stories of a building is set forth. The ground floor represents Nirmanakaya or India; the second floor, Sambhogakaya or China; and the third or highest floor, the Dharmakaya or Tibet. Nirmanakaya is Buddhahood in the shape of transformations representing the evolution of life on earth towards its aim of Buddhahood, including the Buddha himself. It corresponds approximately to the Christian idea of Christhood finding its summation in the Saviour himself. The second, Sambhogakaya, the body of bliss, corresponds to the Christian conception of God the Father; and Dharmakaya, the body of the good law, represents the Christian Holy Ghost as the spirit of religion, the principle and ideal type of religion.

The hymns are inserted which were sung at the inauguration by the great teacher Padmasambhava (sometimes called the "great man of Udyana," or the "great master" or "teacher") and his disciples. Although they interrupt the progress of the narrative, the reader feels that they are essential portions of the novel because they throw light on the effectiveness of religious spells, blessings as well as curses. The teacher Padmasambhava sings four songs, of which the last reads thus in an English translation (pp. 125-126) :

"When the trinity Buddha, Dharma and Sangha,
According to custom are gathered together,
It strikes like thunder into the head of the five hostile poisons.

"The trinity knife, arrow and spear
Strikes like thunder into the hearts of young men in their prime.

"The trinity magic-spell, contemplation and spiritual arms
As used by venerable magicians
Strikes like thunder into the head of the treacherous hostile demons."

From a hymn of joy sung by the lords we quote the following stanzas (p. 127) :

"Living beings tread the path of salvation to the fields on high,
The Tibetan people have entered upon the ten virtues.
The wise one of Za-Hor, the Bodhisatva, has appeared.
How glad am I that we no longer are drawn down towards evil.

"We renounce the ten sins, the pillar of the doctrine;
The signs of the teacher which we have made our own are dear to our hearts;
Leaving off the doings of the transient world we turn to the ten religious exercises.
How delighted am I to know Buddha's course of life!"

It will be noticed here that the ten sins, the ten religious exercises and other enumerations are presupposed to be well known to the reader. They must be considered as an essential characteristic of the Tibetan novel.

The king of the country mentioned in this novel is the Dharma-raja K'ri-sron *Iden-btsan*, who invites the great man of Udyana, Padmasambhava, to enter the temple and lecture on the good religion. One of his disciples, Vairocana, second only to his master, is the hero of the story. The queen falls in love with him. She is impressed with his beauty and with the truth of his teachings, and so, on various pretexts, she sends away the king and her children as well as all her attendants, invites the pious monk into the house and declares to him her infatuation. She speaks to him (pages 145-6), the passage reading in English translation thus: "Master I have invited thee to sGan-snon rtse-dgu because love of thee hath seized me. While always thinking of the Master I have been inflamed with love for thee, Master, because beauty dwells in thy countenance and in thy words the truth. But unconcerned by all this thou sayest nothing; unconcerned by all this, thou wert not born of woman." Thereupon Vairocana leaves the palace saying that if he were seen there the good religion would suffer. The queen is full of wrath and vengeance. She tears her clothes and scratches her face, and when her servants appear she accuses Vairocana to them of having insulted her with offers of illicit love.

Vairocana leaves the country and on the way meets a smith by whom he is well received. Since the smith's wife characterizes the stranger as being gentle in speech and majestic in appearance, having on his head the tonsure that proves him to be a priest and carrying books in his hand, they provide him with food and speed him on his way. In the meantime the smith's wife misses an ornament, and accuses the monk of having stolen it. The smith follows and shoots at him, but the arrow sticks in the book which Vairocana carries and leaves him unhurt. The bow, however, changes into gold and the arrow into turquoise because it has touched a pious man, and the monk informs the smith that he has not stolen the ornament but that their child carried it away and it would be found in the sweepings of the house.

In the meantime the king, who, bent on killing Vairocana, is following him in hot pursuit, reaches the smith's house and hears of the miracles that have been performed. Therefore instead of doing any harm to the suspected monk, he bows low as soon as he overtakes the priest, and asks him to return. The answer of Vairo-

cana reads as follows: "Faithful king and dear ruler, woman's works are like the strong poison *hala*; the beings who consume it are doomed to death. Woman's works are like *raksasi* at work; those who are seized by this whirlpool are doomed to a speedy death. Woman's works are like the pit of hell; those who are caught in this whirlpool seize upon dirt. Woman's works are like the prison of the circle of life; he who is contaminated thereby has no chance to partake of salvation. Woman's works are like the mischief of Mara; who comes in contact therewith will experience immeasurable misery. In my soul there is no germ of passion; since there is naught of it in my soul how could it originate in my body?"

Thus he preaches on the mischief of woman's works and refuses to return. The king is very sad at having lost this valuable priest, and in his anger begins to curse the queen, Ba dMar-rgyan. The result is that one of the evil spirits, the great Naga Nanda, enters her body as a spider and causes her to be seized with leprosy. The queen calls upon a soothsayer, a woman skilled in magic and prophecy, but all her efforts to cure the disease are in vain; and finally the soothsayer says nothing can help her unless she will confess the sin by which she has brought this disease upon herself. Yet "the queen confessed her guilt in her heart but not with her mouth" (page 163).

The king, however, called to his assistance the great man of Udyana, Padmasambhava, who in turn called his disciple Vairocana. Now at last the queen confessed her sin. She said to the great man in the presence of all: "Oh, light of the doctrine, treasure of Udyana, I am a passionate being. Although in the change of transmigration the monk Vairocana is no longer subject to rebirth, I felt towards him a powerful love because when I looked at his body I saw beauty, when I listened to his words I heard truth. Desire went out to him from my soul again and again. Seeking an opportunity one morning, I sent away the king, my lord, on a walk through the city. I sent away my children, the brother and sister, to play, and I sent away my attendants to divert their attention. Then I met the Master alone and received him. I invited him to the upper floor of the palace and offered him savory viands. One can always count on such treatment. But how was the Master born, that he should be unaffected by this?² Then I embraced him, but he was terrified and trembled. He spoke these words, 'If the attendants see me the

² The translator explains the passage as meaning that he is not born as a common man. He adds that in popular language it would be rendered, "This did not move the Master, for he has not a human heart."

doctrine will suffer, I will return through the outside door to which I have the key.' With an upright heart he left me and went away. I remained and waited. I looked after him but he was gone and did not care for me. He had already reached the Bu-ts'al and all was over. For him I bore heavy grief in my heart and played the comedy of a lie, uttered curses, and yet I could not turn the Master. When the sun had reached the west and had set, I sent away the king again, and again invited the Master, but he came not; then I vented my wrath. Oh, light of the doctrine, all these sins have I committed, and is this disease of leprosy really my punishment? In my heart I cherish doubts, light of the doctrine, teacher of Udyana, my son has searched the whole country for the Master whom we have lost, but has not found him. Wherefore has he gone and how can I be cured of my disease?"

It is characteristic of the style of the novel that this confession is received with joy by all the parties who hear it. Our author states that Padmasambhava of Udyana rejoiced heartily and so did the king and his son and daughter. The men present, however, said, "The Master, the holy one, is of course unimpeachable, he may smile." And we read in this expression of the common sentiment the religious joy which the public in general feels at the proof that the monk's behavior remains justified.

The king's main anxiety now is to cure the queen, and he is bent on having the monk Vairocana in order to restore his wife's health. All of them weep, and their tears are pathetically described as being as large as peas, an expression which is repeated whenever tears are said to express unusually great grief. The black spider is conjured by the monk Vairocana, and when this evil creature leaves the queen's body, it is as if a sunbeam pervaded all her limbs. The great man of Udyana, however, cast spittle at the queen, saying, "Oh sinner, suffering under the guilt of thy actions, may the many limbs of Naga depart from thee!" Then three times he cast spittle with his tongue at the Naga, saying, "Thou who understandest how to seize upon her but not to let go, pernicious Naga! Freed from their palsy the limbs shall again unite with the body. Henceforward shall her soul have peace."

It is interesting to note here that spittle forms a powerful means of magic.³ It will be remembered also that Jesus cured the blind with spittle which he mixed with the soil of the earth.

The queen is afterwards treated by conjurations by repeating

³ Cf. also A. H. Godbey's article on "Ceremonial Spitting" in *The Monist*, January, 1914.

many Buddhist names. She is showered with perfumes, and sacrifices are offered for her sake. When the cure is perfected she shows her gratitude to the great one of Udyana by offering him her daughter in marriage on the ground that the race of such great conjurers should not die out. Here we find that the principle of celibacy is entirely forgotten and overlooked, and for sheer compassion towards mankind the great one of Udyana, Padmasambhava, accepts the hand of the princess K'rom-pa rgyan. Before the marriage is concluded the king and the great man of Udyana decide to have an investigation made as to whether or not the princess is worthy of this honor, and a soothsayer of Nepal whose name was Shakyadeva investigates the question. Here a passage is inserted enumerating the many beauties of the princess in minute detail, which lead up to the conclusion that she is worthy. The passage is curious in so far as we see here the Tibetan notion of a woman's beauty.

The marriage took place, but there was new trouble in store. The bride dreamed that a ray of black light six feet long entered her body, and when she awoke she felt an unwonted heaviness and a trembling passed through her body. Her mind was troubled, her heart was cramped, and she felt very uncomfortable. Her anxiety caused her to keep quiet about the event, and when she bore a son he turned out to be a creature of unparalleled viciousness, the truth being that she had conceived a son by an offspring of Mara. The son was addicted to all kinds of sin and gave his parents great trouble until finally it became apparent that he was the son of the black spirit gNer-Pa Se-Ap'an. Finally he died but his spirit became converted and was saved. All lamented at his death, saying, "Truly he was the son of Mara who took possession of the body of the princess." The great one of Udyana says: "Why do you all complain? Weep not, K'rom-pa rgyan. He was not our son. Some say he was the son of the mercy of the gods, others the son of the demon's enmity, others a son of the unhappiness of hell, still others a son ensnared by Raksasa—at any rate a son given to us in spite of our deeds of benevolence. Among hundreds and thousands of cases there are only a few of this kind. Whatever may have been the cause of this son it is certain that this calamity has come upon us through committing some evil deed in one of our former births. Since this calamity was an unbearable burden it has been born to us as a son and has taken possession of our hearts. Though we could not love him he has been given us as a means of retribution."

The unfortunate mother asked where her son had been born before and where he would be reborn in the future, and her husband

answered in a tirade against all sinful beings and especially against women. Among others things he said: "Like the unceasing stream of Samsara are women; like the incarnate black-headed Raksasi in the midst of whose body has grown a piece of the copper of hell; it has been refined in fire and all misfortune arises from it. The fiery places of mT'o-ris T'ar-pa are made of that copper and the purification of virtue and vice is accomplished by it. The doings of women are like this copper of hell; if they are united with thee thou wilt be cooked in the copper of hell. The punishment to be cooked in the copper of hell can not be forced upon me. The doings of women are like the dungeon of Mara. If they unite with thee thou art in the dungeon of Mara. The punishment of sitting in the dungeon of Mara can not be forced upon me. The doings of women are like the fetters of Yama. If they cling to thee, thou art bound by Yama's fetters. The coercion of Yama's fetters can not affect me, Padmasambhava. The doings of women are like a morass of poison. If they cling to thee thou wilt be boiled in the morass of poison. The compulsion to walk over the fatal morass of poison can not affect me. Women in gorgeous colors are robbers who decoy men from their duties. Let men ignorant of the injunctions of scripture turn astray towards evil. I, Padmasambhava, have no inclination to do so. In order to mitigate the sufferings of those who wish to follow me, you stayed with me, K'rom-pa-rgyan, in the incomparable temple filled with glowing reverence. Untouched by the stain of sin you dreamed that a rainbow ladder was let down from heaven and the end the ladder was put upon your shoulders, that upon the rungs walked Vajrasatva, he who is endowed with good omens and from whose body a thousand bright rays proceed. When you awoke you felt bodily comfort and mental joy. Hoping for the highest Siddhi, you kept it secret from men. A son of good omen will be born to the royal princess. This son will be of an inventive genius, a Nirmanakaya. He will fulfil every desire, and what one wishes will be in accord with his heart. When only a year shall have passed he will attain the measure of wisdom; in his second year he will possess the heart of mercy; in his third year he will have the courage to ask his father religious questions. The son will ponder over his father's answers. He will avoid sin and become renowned for his virtues. He will be honored with a great name.⁴ The holy scripture he will know. He will mediate on the world's sinful inclination, and he who would not recognize its significance nor give heed to what he hears will not be saved from the stream

⁴ The translator believes that the name given him was mutilated.

of ignorance and doubt. Glorious is a religious change of heart, but more glorious is the Mahayana. Glorious it is to teach truth, but more glorious is devotion. Therefore he will be my son, a child of bliss. The understanding of the little boy will be directed upwards and his espousal of religion's cause will grow greater and greater, for by impious words salvation is not attained. Is not this your own thought, princess? Such a son would be a jewel, a gift for one without children. If in deeds, words and disposition, he has untiringly accumulated treasures, one need not retain a recollection, one need not retain a recollection of him when his body and soul will be separated, for we should esteem his inner treasures higher than his bodily condition. Even after death and even if people do not think of him, his many talents are so great that they will continue to live to an advanced age. A man to whom such a son is given has acquired great salvation."

The story of the evil son of the great man of Udyana reminds us of the Christian story of Robert the Devil, who though the son of the devil becomes finally converted and the angels rejoice that the very son of the evil one has been gained over from the cause of his hellish father to the cause of God.

The conclusion of the book consists of expressions of sundry doctrines of Buddhism, the efficacy of the magic power of religion, the further expansion of Buddhism and kindred subjects.

The volume before us contains the Tibetan original in a clear clean type, the German translation, an appendix containing several colophons of different manuscripts, an interpretation by the translator, a good index and illustrations reproduced from the Tibetan designs, the latter by Albert Grünwedel. The printing of the book which deserves great credit has been done by Drugulin of Leipsic.

The peculiarities of Tibetan taste are obvious in the tendency to extol the good religion over everything. The characters portrayed are passionate, as the Tibetans are by nature, and the sympathy of both writer and reader is apparently on the side of the sinner, while their admiration is reserved for the saint who is above all temptation. There is further a great interest shown in the dialectics of Buddhism, expositions of the law according to their system of enumeration, other details of theological subtleties, and above all in the comfort taken in the magical power of religious songs and religious ceremonies.